HOSEA 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Hosea's Second Symbolic Marriage	Israel Will Return to God	The Restoration of Gomer	Hosea and the Unfaithful Woman	Second Account of Hosea's Marriage
3:1-5	3:1-5	3:1-5	3:1	3:1-3
			3:2-5	The Explanation
				3:4-5

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 3:1-5

[1]Then the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman *who* is loved by *her* husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes." [2]So I bought her for myself for fifteen *shekels* of silver and a homer and a half of barley. [3]Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you." [4]For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or *sacred* pillar and without ephod or household idols. [5]Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.

3:1 "Go again, love a woman *who* is loved by *her* husband, yet an adulteress" Notice YHWH is the speaker! This verse begins with two *Qal* IMPERATIVES.

1. Go (BDB 229, KB 246)
2. Love (BDB 12, KB 17 [this VERB is used four times in this one verse])

He is commanding Hosea to love again his unfaithful and divorced marriage partner. The second use of "love" is a *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE CONSTRUCT, which denotes the husband's (i.e., Hosea as an analogy of YHWH) ongoing love!

There has been much discussion about the identity of this woman. Some believe it is impossible that this refers to Gomer and, therefore, must be another cultic prostitute or an unfaithful, divorced wife. However, to me, the symbolism of God's faithful love for Israel demands that this is Gomer, and the term "again" (BDB 728) lends itself toward this interpretation. The legal divorce in Hos. 2:2 seems to have become a reality. Gomer continued to be unfaithful until she was sold as a slave.

The term "again" (BDB 728) could refer to the Lord speaking to Hosea a second time about Gomer, but the MT marks denote that it was part of YHWH's words to Hosea. Although the MT's additions beyond the consonantal text are not inspired, they represent the ancient Jewish tradition about punctuation and pronunciation. This issue will have to remain open!

▣

NASB	**"love a woman *who* is loved by *her* husband"**
NKJV	**"love a woman *who is* loved by her lover" (footnote, "friend" or "husband")**
NRSV	**"love a woman who has a lover"**
TEV	**"show your love for a woman who is commiting adultery with a lover"**
NJB, REB	**"love a woman who loves another man"**
LXX	**"love a woman who loves evil things"**
Peshitta	**"love a woman who is fond of doing evil things"**

The term (BDB 945) has several usages. Here are some examples:

1. friend, Jdg. 14:20; Micah 7:5
2. associate, Zech. 3:8
3. lover, Song of Songs 5:16
4. husband, Jer. 3:1,20
5. companion, Job 30:29

The SINGULAR is unusual for a prostitute. Some scholars think it refers to her owner or unique cultic lover. I think in context it refers to her own previous husband (i.e., Hosea).

▣ **"even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel"** This is the third use of the VERB love in Hos. 3:1 (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). This is the crucial analogy!

▣ **"though they turn to other gods"** This is the term (BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) that Moses used in predicting that the descendants of Jacob would become Canaanite fertility worshipers (cf. Deut. 31:18,20; see SPECIAL TOPIC: FERTILITY WORSHIP OF THE ANE). YHWH Himself pleaded with them not to yield to this temptation (cf. Lev. 19:4; 20:6).

▣ **"and love raisin cakes"** This is the fourth use of the VERB love (*Qal* PARTICIPLE), describing how the Israelites embraced Ba'al worship. These small delicacies were given to the worshipers after a time of sacrifice (cf. 2 Sam. 6:19). They are also referred to in Isa. 16:7 and Jer. 7:18; 44:19 as objects of fertility worship (also possibly Jer. 48:31).

3:2 "So I bought her for myself" The VERB "bought" (BDB 500 II, KB 497, *Qal* IMPERFECT with *waw*) means "to purchase by trade or money" (cf. Deut. 2:6). However, the LXX, following an Arabic cognate, has "hired."

Apparently Hosea bought back his own wife! The price paid was half the price of a slave (cf. Exod. 21:32 and Lev. 27:4). Apparently he paid half in silver and half in produce. This must have strained his financial resources.

Who did he pay it to? The text is so brief that certainty is impossible:

1. to one special lover
2. to her owner
3. to her as a second bridal gift

Since I think that the phrase describing her lover refers to Hosea, then #3 fits the context best, but there is no other example of a second bridal gift in history or the Bible.

▣ **"fifteen *shekels*. . .a homer"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: ANE WEIGHTS AND VOLUMES.

▣ **"a homer and a half of barley"** The word "homer" (BDB 330) means "a donkey load." This equals about five bushels. Therefore, the purchase price includes about 7.5 bushels.

The MT has "a homer of barley and a lethech of barley." This would equal about a homer and a half (Peshitta). The LXX, followed by NRSV, changes the second "barley" to "wine." The UBS Text Project, p. 231, gives the MT a "B" rating (some doubt).

3:3 "You shall stay with me for many days" There was apparently a time of purification for the adulteress. It is analogous to the period of the exile for the people of God.

3:4 There has been much discussion about the meaning of this verse. There are three major theories:

1. these three couplets represent a contrast between YHWHism and Ba'alism
2. these relate to aspects of idolatry, which had become the norm for Israel's religious practices (cf. Hos. 8:4-5;10:7-8,15)
3. these refer to the exilic period when Israel was separated from the Promised Land

▣ **"*sacred* pillar"** Sacred pillars were originally set up as memorials

1. by Moses in Exod. 24:4 as a way to commemorate the establishment of the Covenant of Sinai (e.g., Josh. 4:3,9,20)
2. to some great event or to an appearance of God
    a. Shechem, (cf. Josh 24:26)
    b. Bethel (cf. Gen. 28:18)
    c. Gilead (cf. Gen. 31:45)
    d. Gilgal (cf. Jos. 4:5)
    e. Mizpah (cf. 1 Sam. 7:12)
    f. Gibeon (cf. 2 Sam. 20:8)
    g. En-Rogel (cf. 1 Kgs. 9:9)

They came to be connected to the idolatrous sins of Ba'al worship and are condemned in Exod. 34:13; Deut. 12:3; 16:22; Micah 5:13. This demonstrates how the same practice or items or place can be accepted in an older part of the OT, but condemned in other parts.

▣ **"ephod"** This originally referred to a priestly garment (e.g., 1 Sam. 2:18; 22:18). A special one was worn by the High Priest (e.g., Exod. 25:7; 28:6-35). The Urim and Thummim were kept in a pouch behind the breastpiece, which was attached to the front of the ephod (cf. Exod. 28:30; see SPECIAL TOPIC: URIM AND THUMIM).

The ephod was a sign of YHWH's priests. It became an attempt to legitimize unlawful shrines, sanctuaries, and priests (e.g., Jdg. 8:26-27; 17:5; 18:14,17,18,20). Possibly a life sized idol was draped with an elaborate cloak. This then would imply the place of divine revelation (an oracle).

SPECIAL TOPIC: EPHOD

▣ **"household idols"** Literally this is *teraphim* (BDB 1076). The etymology and origin are uncertain.

SPECIAL TOPIC: *TERAPHIM*

3:5 "Afterwards" This is a common ADVERB (BDB 29) used in a number of ways. Here it seems to refer to the time after YHWH's period of judgment. A related term (BDB 31), "in the last days," is used at the end of Hos. 3:5. It denotes a future event from the author's perspective. The exact time frame is ambiguous. YHWH will judge His people, but after that, following a period, He will restore them!

These future orientations and time markers are a theological way of asserting YHWH's knowledge of and control over history. YHWH's judgments must be seen against the big picture of His accomplishing His ultimate goal of fellowship with humankind! Even judgments are parental love (cf. Hosea 11).

▣ **"the sons of Israel return and seek the LORD"** Here are the two pillars of biblical faith; one is negative and one is positive (e.g., Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21; 26:20). We must "turn from"—that is repentance (i.e., "return" BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT, see SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE), and we must "turn to"—that is faith (i.e., "seek" BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* PERFECT with *waw*, cf. Hos. 5:6,15; 7:10; Isa. 45:19; 65:1; Zeph. 1:6; 2:3). Another element of Israel's change of heart is seen in Hos. 3:5 in the words "they will come trembling." This term seems to involve a new "awe" and "respect" for God.

▣ **"David their king"** David was the ideal king. YHWH made perpetual promises to him and his seed in 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17. Hosea's peer, Amos, also mentions an eschatological return to a Davidic king (i.e., the Messiah, cf. Hos. 1:11; Amos 9:11-15; Jer. 33:15,21-22,25-26; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-28). The political split between Judah and Israel was seen as temporary and sinful (e.g., Hos. 3:4; 7:7; 10:15) because of Jeroboam I's setting up of the golden calves (e.g., Hos. 8:5) at the cities of Bethel and Dan as rival cultic centers to Mt. Moriah.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH

SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIANIC ERA

▣ **"they will come trembling to the LORD"** This VERB (BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* PERFECT with *waw*) is used in a similar way (and same form) by Hosea's fellow eighth century prophet in Judah, Micah (cf. Hos. 7:17). It is used in several senses:

1. positives of the faithful
    a. respect God's word, Ps. 119:16
    b. no fear for the faithful, Ps. 78:53; Prov. 3:24; Isa. 12:2; 44:8
    c. sense of awesome joy at YHWH's deliverance, Isa. 60:5; Jer. 33:9; Hosea 5
2. negative of sinners, Ps. 119:120; Isa. 33:14; 44:11

▣ **"and to His goodness"** The NOUN "goodness" (BDB 375) is paralleled with "YHWH." This term is used in many senses. It can describe Israel's God. It is meant to describe Israel. It is the opposite of sin, evil, and darkness (cf. Amos 5:14-15)! It can be translated "prosperity" or "blessing" (e.g., Jer. 31:12,14). God wanted to bless Israel as a reward for covenant fidelity and attract the world to Himself. However, Israel could not/did not obey. This resulted in judgment (cf. Deut. 27-29; 30;15).

Eschatological blessing will not be dependant on human covenant performance, but on a divine performance matched by a new willingness and ability for godliness (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38)! Verse 5 is another reversal of Israel's current condition, another promise of hope and restoration, another prophecy about a coming Davidic king/Messiah!

▣ **"in the last days"** Throughout the book of Hosea there is an eschatological element. The Jews saw only two ages—the current evil one and the age of the Messiah who was to come. However, from further revelation in the NT we know that there are two comings of the Messiah instead of one. We currently live in the last days, which is an overlapping of these two Jewish ages. The last days are the period of time from Jesus' birth at Bethlehem to His Second Coming.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE LAST DAYS

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